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DE RUEHGB #0748/01 0731526
ZNY SSSSS ZZH (CCY ADX 6DB804/MSI8832)
P 131526Z MAR 08 ZDS
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6213
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T BAGHDAD 000748

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDED SIPDIS CAPTION)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/13/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT WASIT: PRT INCREASES SADRIST ENGAGEMENT

REF: BAGHDAD 367

Classified By: PRT Team Leader Wade Weems for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S//REL USA, ACGU) Summary. In a meeting with Wasit PRT on 1 March, Sadrist Trend Provincial Council member Ahmed Hasan Ebrah and Deputy PC Chairman Nisar Kathim Fraieh described the continued adherence to the ceasefire in al Kut by "true" Jaysh al Mahdi and applauded perceived changes in the tactics of CF-supported Iraqi SWAT police. Both men spoke hopefully of future relations with the US and requested further US support to develop the province, to improve Iraqi police and border patrol capabilities and to combat Iranian influence. This engagement opened lines of communication between the PRT and Sadrist Trend members, who frequently call to express opinions on critical events and developments in the province. End Summary.

Ceasefire Effect

¶2. (S//REL USA, ACGU) Ebrah opened by delivering the text of Muqtada al Sadr's ceasefire declaration, telling the PRT that, per Najaf, "no one carrying a weapon is part of Jaysh al-Mahdi." Nevertheless, he said JAM is blamed for acts that are in fact committed by "defectors" or elements unaffiliated with JAM, citing as an example a recent IED attack against Iraqi SWAT members south of Camp Delta. Ebrah said that Sadrist Trend members had met with Wasit Iraqi Police (IP) Chief, Major General Abdul Haninn Hamud in an effort to help him identify non-compliant militia members. Finally, Ebrah suggested that the ceasefire had made it easier to identify and capture other criminal and extremist elements, such as the Jund al-Sama.

Pleased with Cooperation

¶3. (S//REL USA, ACGU) Ebrah and Fraieh were complimentary of US presence, and strongly recommended that the PRT "widely publicize all American support" to the Iraqi people. (Note. Fraieh was thought to be a member of Da'wa, but apparently has abandoned his original affiliation in favor of the Sadrist Trend, the fourth PC member to do so. End note.) Both men, dressed in western suits, were relaxed and amiable, and Fraieh went on at length about his fondness for American movies and, in particular, the work of John Wayne.

¶4. (S//REL USA, ACGU) In a previous meeting with the PRT, Ebrah asked for changes in what he described as heavy-handed tactics by Iraqi SWAT. He said in this meeting that he noticed and appreciated positive changes over the past month, as CF and Iraqi forces "were treating citizens better." He nevertheless recommended continued movement towards pure Iraqi control over IP forces and commensurately diminished CF control. He also requested that CF support the IP and Department of Border Enforcement, and ensure adequate

training, equipment, and supplies for those forces. Both men decried the porous border and stressed the importance of having well-trained forces there to protect the country from negative Iranian influences. And both expressed enthusiasm for the incoming Wasit PRT Rule of Law advisor and asked that he focus on improving IP criminal investigative capability.

¶5. (S//REL USA, ACGU) In the previous meeting with the PRT, Ebrah asked for the release of fifty detainees. But he balked during this meeting at signing CF Guarantor Release Agreements for five of them until he could assess whether "from the Iraqi perspective, the detainees are okay to be released." He noted that the "Sadrism Trend is a very large movement" and that he "did not know everyone in the movement and would need to clear the names with Najaf" before signing. The two men seemed genuinely appreciative of the efforts to secure release of detainees on their submitted list. (Note: These efforts are part of a larger 3ID detainee release program and are not a PRT initiative, although the PRT hopes to benefit from the goodwill associated with the releases. End Note.)

¶6. (S//REL USA, ACGU) Touting the recent tranquility in Wasit (which he credited to the ceasefire), Ebrah said that it was "now time for reconstruction." He requested PRT support in purchasing medical supplies for the al Kut Hospital, specifically asking for an emergency shipment of blood bags to address a current critical shortage. Ebrah even offered to meet at the al Kut Hospital to accept the delivery and to hold a joint press conference to thank the PRT. The PRT agreed to consider the project.

¶7. (S//REL USA, ACGU) Since the 1 March meeting, the PRT has been in frequent contact with Ebrah on several issues. First, in the wake of IP and CF operations in the Zuwerijat neighborhood of al Kut, a known JAM stronghold, Ebrah called on 5 March to offer his congratulations on what he described as a successful and welcome operation. Second, on 10 March, Ebrah called to report that a reported addition of a right to

¶8. (S//REL USA, ACGU) Comment. The PRT will pursue continued engagement with Sadrism Trend figures in Wasit, by coordinating with CF for measured and appropriate detainee releases in response to Ebrah's requests, and by responding to the request for medical supplies for the al Kut Hospital. In future engagements we will continue to emphasize common ground with Sadrism Trend politicians who aspire to shed the thuggish image of Jaysh al Mahdi and establish themselves as a respectable, electable, political force. And we will highlight our mutual interest in marginalizing and quieting non-compliant militia and criminal elements that could tarnish Sadrism political aspirations with outbursts of violence, reminding the people and voters of Wasit of the movement's bloody recent history. End Comment.
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